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Viewing cable 06ATHENS1582, GREEK JUSTICE MINISTER REQUESTS TRANSFER OF

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06ATHENS1582	2006-06-20 15:37	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Athens

Appears in these articles:

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VZCZCXYZ0047
PP RUEHWEB

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ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 201537Z JUN 06
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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5864
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 001582

SIPDIS

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FOR EUR/SE
JUSTICE FOR OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, CRIMINAL
DIVISION AND PRISONER TRANSFER UNIT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/19/2026
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [GR](#)
SUBJECT: GREEK JUSTICE MINISTER REQUESTS TRANSFER OF
"SUPERVISED RELEASE" FOR CONVICTED SPY LALAS

Classified By: Ambassador Charles P. Ries for reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (U) On June 19, Ambassador received a letter from Greek Justice Minister Anastasis Papaligouras with a copy of a letter to Attorney General Gonzalez (see para 5) requesting that former Embassy Athens communicator and convicted spy Steven Lalas be allowed to serve the remainder of his "supervised release" in Greece. The Minister asks this request be granted on humanitarian grounds, as Lalas' wife and children are now permanent residents in Greece. By way of assurance, the Minister notes that "Greek judicial authorities shall undertake to honor all standard conditions of supervision imposed on Lalas." Local media reported on June 17 that the original letter to the U.S. Attorney General was transmitted by the Greek Ministry of Justice on June 16.

BACKGROUND

¶2. (C) Lalas pleaded guilty in 1993 in the Eastern District of Virginia of conspiracy to commit espionage for passing classified information to Greek intelligence circles while he worked at Embassy Athens. In the two years before his arrest, he passed at least 240 "Confidential" and "Secret" level documents to a Greek military official in exchange for money, including highly sensitive messages revealing covert identities and job descriptions of U.S. Central Intelligence Agency personnel. He was sentenced to 168 months (14 years) imprisonment and a five year term of supervised release. Lalas served his prison sentence in the U.S. and was released to the supervision of the United States Parole and Probation Service in New Hampshire on July 8, 2005.

¶3. (SBU) In May 2003, Lalas applied to serve the remainder of his sentence in Greece under the Prisoner Transfer Treaty. The United States received no documentation in support of the transfer request from the Greek government. The FBI, U.S. Attorney, and U.S. counterintelligence officials strongly opposed the request, and it was denied. In July 2005, the GoG informally requested information on the provisions of the supervised release of Lalas. At that time, the Office of International Affairs at DOJ confirmed that it would strongly oppose a request for Lalas to travel to Greece, and would be "very much opposed" to a transfer of Lalas' supervised release to Greece under the Prisoner Transfer Treaty, noting the offense is too serious to consider transfer of the supervision.

RECOMMENDATION

¶4. (C) Embassy Athens sees little foreign policy benefit in granting the current GoG request and therefore recommends against an effort to arrange for Lalas to serve the remainder of his supervised release in Greece. The release of the letter to the press, even before it was delivered to us, indicates that this is largely intended for public consumption. We believe that not meeting the request will not harm our bilateral relationship with Greece. In a courtesy reply, however, we suggest we focus on the fact that the terms of Mr. Lalas' parole are the responsibility of the independent judiciary. This would parallel the Greek Ministry's response to our request for help in the case of Seamen Vossler and Wright.

¶5. (U) Attached is the text of two letters from the Justice Minister:

LETTER TO AMBASSADOR RIES

Hellenic Republic
The Minister of Justice
Athens, 16/6/2006
Ref: 244

His Excellency
Mr. Charles P. Ries
Ambassador of the United States of America

Dear Ambassador,

I am sending you herewith my letter addressed to the Attorney General of the U.S. Mr. Alberto Gonzalez, concerning the issue of Steven Lalas.

I am counting on your support for the fulfillment of my request.

Yours sincerely,

/s/

Anastasis Papaligouras

LETTER TO ATTORNEY GENERAL:

Hellenic Republic
The Minister of Justice

Athens, 16/6/2006
Ref: 242

The Attorney General of the U.S.
Mr. Alberto R. Gonzalez
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington D.C. 20530-0001

Dear Colleague,

I would hereby like to bring to your attention the issue of Mr. Steven Lalas. As you are certainly aware, Mr. Lalas is a U.S. citizen of Greek origin who was convicted in the U.S. in 1993 to imprisonment of 168 months for delivering defense information to a foreign government. His term of imprisonment has now been completed and Mr. Lalas has been for approximately one year serving supervised release for a term of five years.

As Mr. Lalas's wife and children are now permanent residents in Greece, it is important for purely humanistic reasons to allow him to serve this secondary penalty, for its remaining period, in Greece. The Greek judicial authorities and the Greek government shall undertake to honor all standard conditions of supervision imposed on Mr. Lalas by the United States District Court, Eastern District of Virginia in case number 1: 93 CR00239-001.

I wish to underline the positive effect that a decision allowing Mr. Lalas to serve the remainder of his supervised release in Greece would create and the considerable goodwill for the relations of our two countries. Furthermore, it would enhance the already good working relationship between our two Departments.

It is my sincere hope that you will give the matter your attention and that you will react positively to my request.

Yours sincerely,

/s/

Anastasis Papaligouras
RIES